

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MX

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION: LOS TAPADOS DESTAPADOS (THE COVERED  
ONES UNCOVERED)

REF: A-533 OF DEC. 14, 1974

1. SUMMARY: BREAKING WITH A MINOR ASPECT OF PAST TRADITION, A GOM OFFICIAL NAMED SIX (BY SOME ACCOUNTS SEVEN) PERSONS WHO COULD BE THE PRI (RULING PARTY) PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE FOR JULY 1976 ELECTIONS. THE MOVE IS BEING HERALDED AS ANOTHER ADVANCE OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S POLITICAL REFORM, BUT WE THINK THE CANDIDATE WILL BE SELECTED AS ALWAYS BY THE GOVERNING ELITE, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA HAVING THE LAST WORD. END SUMMARY.

2. MEXICO'S ESOTERIC PROCESS OF CHOOSING ITS PRESIDENT (I.E. THE CANDIDATE OF THE RULING PARTY, THE PRI) IS KNOWN HERE BY THE ONE WORD DESCRIPTIVE "TAPADISMO". TAPADISMO'S ROOT WORD IS "EL TAPADO" (THE COVERED ONE), THE CANDIDATE WHO SUCCEEDS AGAINST RIVAL ONES AND IS UNCOVERED (DESTAPADO) AS THE PRI NOMINEE. COINED BY CARTOONIST ABEL QUESADA IN 1957, "EL TAPADO" GRADUALLY BECAME "LOS TAPADOS", ALL THE ASPIRANTS, ONLY ONE OF WHOM WOULD BE THE NOMINEE. TAPADISMO ESSENTIALLY REFERS TO THE FACT THAT THE SELECTION OF THE PRI CANDIDATE IS A PROCESS CLOSED TO ALL BUT A RULING ELITE, OF WHOM THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT. A MINOR CHARACTERISTIC OF TAPADISMO, HOWEVER, IS THAT NO PARTY OR

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GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL HAS EVER PUBLICLY NAMED LOS TAPADOS.

3. ON APRIL 7 PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA DECLARED TO REPORTERS THAT TAPADISMO DID NOT EXIST, SINCE THE VARIOUS ASPIRANTS ACTUALLY WERE WELL KNOWN TO THE PUBLIC. NO ONE DARED TO ASK THE PRESIDENT FOR THEIR NAMES (THOUGHT HE MAY HAVE BEEN PREPARED TO GIVE THEM). ON APRIL 11, HOWEVER, SECRETARY OF HYDRAULIC RESOURCES LEANDRO ROVIROSA WADE, RESPONDING TO REPORTERS' QUESTIONS, NAMED SIX (BY SOME ACCOUNTS SEVEN) POSSIBLE CANDIDATES: SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT MARIO MOYA PALENCIA, SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCY HUGO CERVANTES DEL RIO, SECRETARY OF TREASURY JOSE LOPEZ PORTILLO, SECRETARY OF LABOR PORFIRIO MUNOZ LEDO, SECRETARY OF AGRARIAN REFORM AUGUSTO GOMEZ VILLANUEVA, AND DIRECTOR OF THE MEXICAN SOCIAL SECURITY INSTITUTE CARLOS GALVEZ BETANCOURT. SOME ACCOUNTS HAD SECRETARY OF PUBLIC WORKS LUIS ENRIQUE BARCAMONTES INSTEAD OF MUNOZ LEDO; OTHERS HAD BOTH FOR A TOTAL OF SEVEN. MOST NAMED THE SIX GIVEN ABOVE.

4. THE FOLLOWING DAY PRI PRESIDENT JESUS REYES HEROLES NONETHELESS DECLARED IT WAS PROHIBITED FOR PRI LEADERS TO LEAN TOWARDS ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE CANDIDATES.

5. COMMENT: TO OUR KNOWLEDGE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME A GOM OFFICIAL (AND LOYAL PRI MEMBER) HAS PUBLICLY NAMED THE VARIOUS CANDIDATES, AND MANY IN THE PRESS HAVE HERALDED IT AS PROOF THAT TAPADISMO IS DEAD (JUST AS THE PRESIDENT SAID), AND AS ANOTHER ADVANCE IN PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S "POLITICAL REFORM" (SEE MEXICO'S A-430 OF SEPTEMBER 18, 1974).

6 IN OUR JUDGMENT, HOWEVER, THE EVENT REPRESENTS MORE A SMALL STEP FOR THE PERSONS NAMED THAT IT DOES A GIANT LEAP FOR MEXICAN POLITICAL REFORM. PERHAPS NAMING THE CANDIDATES WILL ENCOURAGE MORE OPEN COMMENT ON THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE VARIOUS CANDIDATES, A MOVE WHICH THE FOREIGN POLITICAL ANALYST WOULD BE THE FIRST TO APPLAUD. IN THIS SENSE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNING COULD BECOME A LESS CLOSED PROCESS. BUT WE DOUBT THAT NAMING THE ASPIRANTS WILL CHANGE THE MORE FUNDAMENTAL ASPECT OF TAPADISMO -- THE FACT THAT THE PRI'S SELECTION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF ITS CANDIDATE IS NOT AN OPEN PROCESS, OPENLY ARRIVED AT, BUT A PRIVATE DECISION REACHED BY THE RULING ELITE (BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE PRI), PRESIDED OVER BY THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT. THE STATEMENT OF REYES HEROLES, COMING AS IT DID THE DAY AFTER ROVIROSA'S, SEEMED DESIGNED TO SIGNAL NOTHING BASIC HAD CHANGED. TAPADISMO, IN OUR OPINION, STILL LIVES.

7. INCIDENTALLY, ROVIROSA'S STATEMENT CONTAINED NO  
SURPRISES EXCEPT TO CONFIRM A DEVELOPMENT -- SINCE WE  
FIRST ANALYZED THE SUCCESSION -- THAT SECRETARY OF  
AGRARIAN REFORM GOMEZ VILLANUEVA IS ONE OF THE  
ASPIRANTS.  
BRANDIN

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